

Phil Mayer
FCCLA Vice President of Individual Programs
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America
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Testimony

One of the greatest features of life is that life is full of unexpected opportunities. For the past two years, I have had the privilege of serving as a youth leader for Family, Career and Community Leaders of America. This has been a life changing experience and I owe the New Jersey Board of Education members and my local Board of Education members my gratitude for your support of career and technical education.

Good afternoon, I am Phil Mayer and this summer I was elected to serve as the Vice President of Individual Programs for FCCLA. I would not be a National Officer today without the continuing cooperation and encouragement of the Department of Education. The leadership grants provided by the Department of Education supply New Jersey FCCLA with the staff and resources that sustain a strong State Association. While other state associations in the North Atlantic Region are struggling and fading, New Jersey FCCLA has grown and is continuing to thrive. Geographically, New Jersey is the third smallest state in the country; I am proud to tell you that New Jersey FCCLA is rank eleventh in the nation for its FCCLA membership. In addition, since the Leadership Grants started in 1995, thirteen years ago, New Jersey FCCLA had six national officers elected and two of these students served in the national presidents' position. There are some states that have never had a national officer. This alone speaks volumes about the quality of career and technical education in our state.

Being elected as a National Officer has had a very positive affect on my life. I have already traveled to Washington D.C. and met with Senators Lautenberg and Menendez as well as Congressmen Ferguson and Holt. Next month I will be traveling to Buffalo, New York, and Minneapolis, Minnesota to participate in the FCCLA Cluster Meetings. The opportunity to travel on my own and to be independent is making me self sufficient and teaching me valuable life lessons. One of my roles as National Officer is being a role model for the organization. I value this responsibility, knowing that people are looking up to me as a youth leader in FCCLA.

As a member and National Officer, I have had the chance to participate in many meetings across the country where I have met many interesting and diverse members. It is a privilege to meet students from all 50 states and make new friends! Throughout my term so far, I have become aware of differences that make us all unique. I remember my first encounters with FCCLA members from the middle section of the United States. As we were becoming acquainted, they asked me how many hundreds of acres do I live on and how many head of cattle I own. They were shocked to learn that the only animal that I raise is a West Highland Terrier named Sydney. I was equally amazed that one of my council members has only 40 students in their graduating class while I have 580. The differences are incredible yet, the

commonalities of youth leadership, personal development and career preparation unite us as a team.

Learning about others is an important part of the FCCLA experience. This year I am helping to support the FCCLA National Outreach Project, Feed the Children. New Jersey FCCLA has set a goal to raise over \$7,200 to donate to Feed the Children. Chapters from across the state are planning activities such as car washes, pancake breakfasts and garage sales to fund this project. When the goal of \$7,200 is achieved, a truck load of food will be given to 400 families in the city of Camden carried with the heartfelt hope to help and feed the needy. This is an enormous project that requires the planning, energy and dedication that brings out the best in youth and I am excited to be part of this very worthwhile endeavor.

Thank you, once again, for all of your support and encouragement for FCCLA and career and technical education in our state. Everyday you are providing opportunities for students that they would never experience in the traditional classroom. I am one of thousands of New Jersey students who are enjoying the benefits of Career and Technical Student Organizations and the opportunities for leadership development, personal growth and recognition. So far, it has been an amazing year, the best year of my life. The good news is that it is only October and I have eight more months that lie before me with even more unexpected opportunities.